

UK army deployed to English Channel to contain refugee crossings



London, January 4 (RHC)-- Britain's Home Office (Interior Ministry) has demanded the country's military to deploy its vessels to the English Channel to contain a surge in refugee crossings in the waterway.

British media said on Thursday that the Royal Navy had been deployed to the Channel to tackle the problem of increasing number of refugees risking their lives while trying to reach southern English coasts.

The Independent newspaper said Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson was to send a military vessel to the area after interior minister Sajid Javid sent a letter demanding the deployment.

A spokesman of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) said the HMS Mersey was ready to be deployed after the official request of the Home Office.

“Our armed forces stand ready to provide additional capacity and expertise to assist the Home Office with the response to migrant crossings,” said the official, adding that the deployment was meant to protect the integrity of the UK waters.

The military deployment comes as hundreds of refugees have managed to reach southern English coasts over the past few weeks, sparking concerns that Britain would face a wave of refugee arrivals like the one that hit the European shores in 2015.

Javid, a key figure in the ruling Conservative-led government, has already re-assigned two Border Force vessels from the Mediterranean to deployments in the Channel.

Javid was initially reluctant to demand military help to tackle the crisis amid an undeclared race between him and Williamson to succeed Prime Minister Theresa May. There was also an issue with whether Javid’s department or the MoD should pay for the costs of the military deployment.

British authorities said Thursday that they had made two arrests in the city of Manchester in relation to the refugee crisis. That comes as the opposition Labour Party has criticized the government for its relatively harsh response to the new wave of refugee arrivals.

Stella Creasy, a Labour member of the parliament, said Javid and other government ministers were clearly trying to dodge their humanitarian responsibility with regards to the refugee by seeking to block them altogether.

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